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ABSTRACT

Despite writing teachers' best efforts, students still seem to regard the request to revise as intimating failure. Many researchers have noted students' lack of response to teacher comments, and much of this research has provided a corrective lens on vague or even aggressive teacher comments. Unpracticed writers replace the task of revising with editing. Inexperienced and reluctant writers often respond to their writing teacher's end and marginal comments requesting revision by ignoring them or making only minor repairs. Using ungraded work, "in progress" grades, and portfolios are techniques which attempt to direct the students' attention on the process of discovery, on expressing their ideas in writing, and on revising their writing. While the writing teachers in the developmental writing program at Ferris State University currently use a pass/fail system, they continue to wrestle with the issues that grading and non-grading raise including teacher role, student motivation, and reward. In 1995, the faculty returned to portfolios as a source of information about the ways their students responded to the teacher mandate to revise. Using established portfolio assessment procedures, 8 faculty read and evaluated 21 portfolios. Results indicated that developmental students were able to move at least in limited ways beyond the sentence level when teachers guided that activity. Process approach teachers can help students gain facility by helping them practice a range of revision strategies and should use process assessment to credit and reinforce the value and centrality of revising. (Contains 19 references and six figures.) (RS)

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Revision Blocked: Assessing A Writer's Development

by Lynn Chrenka, Sandra Balkema, Faye Kuzma, and Brenda Vasicek

It is a commonplace of our profession that revision improves student writing, and as teachers of writing we assume that revising will result in better writing. Yet, despite our best efforts to engage students in a process that extends to revision, students still seem to regard the request to revise as intimating failure. Thus, textbooks couch advice to students in phrases intended to produce a shift in attitude: "Good writers revise," and an authority such as Toby Fulweiler notes: "revising is writing." Fulweiler's comment reflects an important current recognition of how improvement occurs, yet this shift in perspective has also caused a conflict between teachers' views and students' perceptions of revision, as well as our methods of assessing writing--methods that still privilege the final end product.

The four of us came together because of a shared professional interest in how our classroom and program assessment affects students' improvement as writers. We share a commitment to the process approach and regard a student's ability to revise beyond the sentence level as necessary to making gains in writing. In our ongoing dialogue about the pivotal role revision plays in a writer's development, we have identified several unresolved tensions regarding the role of revision in writing instruction.

In particular, we see a conflict within a profession that values the process approach and values the portfolio as a means of capturing a broad picture of writing ability, but continues to rely on fixed, ideal criteria, discrete skills, and end-product features to evaluate written texts. Thus, it seems to us that we have yet to come to terms fully with the implications of how we assess development in writing. For lack of a better phrase, we need to decide the place of revision in composition classes--not as an end in itself--but as a vehicle to propel the development of writers. Cynthia Onore, from the City College of the City University of New York, has raised some important questions that can serve to frame this discussion.

Examining how students operate as revisers, Onore studied the revisions of four very different student writers. To determine the degree to which students worked to improve coherence overall, evaluators produced statements to represent the macroproposition or main idea for each draft of each student's paper. One of the interesting questions raised by these case studies involved the contrast between the student who did not tamper with the paper at the thesis level, making changes primarily to sentences, versus the student whose drafts showed dramatic reconceptualization of purpose and focus yet did not actually show net improvement in the overall writing performance from draft to draft (246). Traditional product-oriented assessment would not recognize the student's learning to use various revision strategies and techniques. Composition teachers have typically had no way to credit such gains. Portfolios, however, have offered a way for process-oriented teachers to acknowledge a student's efforts to internalize the reflective habit of evaluating the best options for revising—a process that should make that student better prepared to handle diverse writing tasks.

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F. Kuzma

Although revision and editing can and often do occur--virtually--simultaneously, we reserve the term revising to refer to changes a writer makes when concerned about content, focus, audience, purpose, and structure. Because editing involves a different type of reading, we reserve it to refer to the writer's attempts to detect and correct sentence errors to improve a draft's sentence coherence or introduce style features. Teachers of writing need to keep the two terms distinct, if only to help students who often misconstrue revising as editing and fail to read differently for each task.

When editing subverts the writer's process of revising, we consider the revision to be blocked. This "revision block," which seems to be a distinguishing characteristic of unpracticed writers, may be explained according to Frank Smith's discussion of procedural obstacles. In Writing and the Writer, he argues that a writer's block usually stems from a procedural or psychological obstacle (124). Smith focuses on what he calls "groundwork" or the idea-generating stages of a writing task. In our own discussion, we concentrate instead on revising, since the ability to reconceive and rework a text at the global level is the distinguishing characteristic of experienced writers and thus marks a habit of mind not found in the blinders-like focus on grammatical and mechanical concerns that is the hallmark of inexperienced writers.

Our purpose in this article is, therefore, to characterize the types of problems or issues raised by attempting to assess development as it might show up in a student's work with revision. We begin by examining the way students see and respond to teacher comments, including the dialogue process-oriented teachers initiate, the silencing force of grades, and the kind of instant replay and resounding of learning themes made possible when portfolios become a means to reward and invigorate the revision habit.

Task Definition and Commitment as Boundaries to Development

Many researchers have noted students' lack of response to teacher comments, and much of this research has provided a corrective lens on vague or even aggressive teacher comments that do little to guide much less encourage revision. (Twelve Readers Reading is one such recent study). However, even when the comments are positive, nonjudgmental, and meaning-centered, unpracticed writers seem paralyzed, unwilling or unable to rethink their approach holistically to reformulate their texts to address a reader's comments or confusions. The research on revising suggests that while experienced writers review their own drafts with an eye to clarifying meaning in relation to the needs of an audience and their purpose, inexperienced writers tend to forego the larger issues in pursuit of sentence level errors (Beach, 1976; Sommers, 1980). Revision is apparently construed as correcting sentence errors or rewording sentences.

In effect, unpracticed writers replace the task of revising with another, more rule-bound task--that of editing. This is typical of inexperienced writers; for years researchers have

pointed out the preponderance of sentence level changes in the drafts of novice writers (Stallard, 1974; Pianko, 1979; Perl, 1980; Bridwell, 1980). Editing is an activity governed by fairly inflexible rules—it invites relatively clear-cut, black and white distinctions between right and a wrong answers, whereas, revising opens up multiple and diverse possibilities in responding to readers' concerns. To put a face on this issue, let's watch as a student we will call "Bill" responds to his teacher's invitations to expand and clarify the content of a draft.

The assignment is the second in a series for a course in basic reading and writing based on the Pittsburgh Model. Students in this course are engaged in the study of "the search for identity." By the time they receive this second assignment, they have already read a novel, A Wizard of Earthsea, they have begun to discuss the effects that significant events have on a person's identity, and they have written their way through an earlier assignment requiring them to explore this issue in multiple drafts as they reflect on their reading, class discussions, and their personal experiences. The teacher has invited them to try out various perspectives as they work through a way of understanding, and their classmates have encouraged them in small group work sessions to "fill in details," to go beyond just "telling," and to support general statements by demonstrating for them exactly what those statements mean.

So, when the writer received this assignment, he knew what his readers (classmates and teacher) might expect. The focus has changed from an event to a person, but the writer is still exploring what factors shape a person's identity, and preceding his initial draft, the class discussion included references to the characters who had a significant effect on Ged in A Wizard of Earthsea and why. For this assignment, however, the teacher collected the initial draft to respond to it before the writer had an opportunity to share it in the small work groups.

What the teacher saw in the initial draft was a piece of writing that in her mind had the potential to be a "real gem" (See Figure 1). Her comments to the student are positive and meaning-centered, and they ask the student to fill in the details and develop the points he makes so that the reader has a better understanding of this person and her impact on his identity. The teacher also poses questions to encourage fuller development and a deeper, more critical response to the experience presented in the draft. Interestingly, this teacher has a "hands-off" commenting style (according to Twelve Readers Reading). Rather than boxing text, crossing out material, or otherwise marking on the actual text, this teacher stays on the sidelines, so to speak, maintaining the coach's stance as observer but also promoting critical thinking through her use of questioning. Following the Pittsburgh model, the teacher prefers to suggest options rather than assert directives.

She particularly pushes at him in comment #5 to explore what he's saying in a way that might put him on a related, but slightly different path in his discussion of this person's influence on him. The teacher asks: "What are some examples of different ways to make jewelry? Which one did you end up liking best and why?" In her summative, final remarks (comment 6) the teacher included suggestions for paragraphing, intended to provoke higher-level global, structural revising.

Figure 1

Design For Life

Sheryl is about fifty years old and has been making jewelry for about thirty of those years. I met Sheryl a couple of years ago, while looking for a job. When I first met her, I could not believe that she was an artist. I had an easier time picturing her in a cycle gang.

Sheryl is about six feet tall with burgundy hair spiked on top. She wears leather and a lot of chain jewelry. She also owns two classic Harley Davidsons. But she is a great artist.

Sheryl is a hard person to get along with for most people. She is a lot like me with my temper. The littlest things would set her off, being so much alike we got along pretty well. We also like the same styples in the jewelry we make.

She has had such an impact on my life because of what she has taught me and brought out in me.

When I first started working for Sheryl at Elon Designs she taught me all the basic of metals and precious stones. For instance she taught me what metal could be fused and what ones could not. She taught me the prices of metals and stones and how to figure out how much to sell the finished product for. She also let me develop my own style to making the jewelry which is unusual for a jeweler to do. Usually they want you to do every thing like theirs. She also taught me the different ways and steps to making jewelry, and let me decide which one I liked.

Sheryl has taught me to open my mind and to be creative. She has introduced me into a field in which I hope to work in for the rest of my life.

Good way to begin & can see how.

(2) How can you show your reader that she is "a great artist"?

(3) How could you demonstrate Sheryl's being hard to get along with"?

(4) What is your style? Can you explain further

(5) What are some examples of different ways to make jewelry? Which one did you end up liking best and why?

(6) when you revise this, take a look at your organization — particularly your paragraphing. What paragraphs could you possibly combine because their ideas are related? Also, I'm interested in knowing more about how Sheryl taught you to open your mind and to be creative.

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What the teacher saw in the second draft was not surprising, but nonetheless frustrating. First, the only apparent change the writer has made in this second draft is to adjust his paragraphing (Figure 2). He has apparently ignored the comments asking for more development and more details in favor of simplifying the task as much as possible. When multiple options are suggested, the writer appears to "freeze" up, unable to make any but the most minimal of maneuvers in response to the teacher's comments.

Why is this writer so evidently paralyzed—so bound by the task of revising—unwilling or unable to rethink or manipulate his text except to make only the most basic change? That's the question writing teachers are asking particularly of developmental writers, but also of more advanced writers. Why do students seem "blocked" by the task of revising? If we acknowledge that the cognitive demands of revising are in direct conflict with the formal demands of editing, how can we best intervene to help students make the shift to becoming revisers?

Our inquiry here is an effort to understand why teachers' comments fail to elicit the desired revision behaviors in writers even though we believe teacher comment to be a powerful assessment tool, helping inexperienced and even reluctant writers become more self-directed as they internalize the strategies suggested and apply them to future drafts. One reason we believe students fail to revise is they misconstrue the need to revise as a need to edit. Moreover, they are not usually committed to rewriting a draft more than once. Their commitment to rework a paper extends to one additional draft; revisiting the draft might be said to be defined by students as a housekeeping task—cleaning up for spelling or fuzziness.

This end-product emphasis of inexperienced writers means they will focus on the formal features of their discourse exclusively—a focus that situates them on the bottom rung of the critical thinking ladder. Yet, the dichotomy between the formalistic thought required for students to adhere to the conventions of standard English and the higher order thinking necessary to rethink their drafts has led process teachers to extend the notion of revision. Through workshops, conferences, and "works in progress," process teachers try to keep the paper liquid for as long as possible, to keep the ideas fermenting and brewing to their fullest potential (Twelve Readers Reading).

Meanwhile, inexperienced and reluctant writers often respond to their writing teacher's end and marginal comments requesting revision by simply ignoring them or making only minor repairs, as we have seen in the case of Bill. Once the pen has filled up the page and the ideas are expressed, the meaning of the piece of writing is conceptually locked in: the writer may be so committed to a draft that any comments about content go unseen. Such a student resolutely resists any teacher suggestions for expanding or relating ideas as counter to the initial intention or view expressed, or worse, as a judgment that the paper has failed utterly to communicate.

Perhaps these writers themselves fail to become readers of their own work, or maybe it is simply that they are reluctant to spend more time on a project for which they have already predicted their own failure. Perhaps students fail to revise because they see teachers only as evaluators and judges, not as readers seeking a better understanding of the writer's words. Two researchers at Syracuse University, Martin Nystrand and Deborah Brandt, argue that teacher

Figure 2

Design For Life

Sheryl is about fifty years old and has been making jewelry for about thirty of those years. I met Sheryl a couple of years ago, while looking for a job. When I first met her, I could not believe that she was an artist. I had an easier time picturing her in a cycle gang. Sheryl is about six feet tall with burgundy hair spiked on top. She wears leather and a lot of chain jewelry. She also owns two classic Harley Davidsons. But she is a great artist.

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comment is limited in provoking revision because of the teacher's overarching role as grader (210). They contend that writing groups have the greatest potential to motivate revision because they act as an immediate audience and thus supply the most legitimate context for revision. Yet, their studies of writing groups also suggest the limitations of such groups to deal with higher order concerns.

In fact, while group discussions may propel revisions, these researchers found, in their own words, instances in which students "downshifted" from analysis or argument to the less critical discourse of report writing. Nystrand and Brandt explain this revision in positive terms, as an appropriate response to the comments of those in their small groups who supply immediate feedback to drafts. However, they fail to address the issue of how such changes in genre affect the teacher's methods of evaluating student performance. As process teachers, should we reward the student's willingness to reconceive the draft at the thesis-level, setting aside course objectives that may require that students produce certain kinds of writing? Since writing assignments are usually tied to specific course objectives, such downshifting may mean the student has failed to meet basic objectives for the assignment or the course, and process teachers need to plan for this kind of task reformulation.

Moreover, the minimal teacher-control over the direction taken within the Writing Studio small-groups at Syracuse does not address the specific needs of inexperienced writers who feel both unqualified to comment on their peer's work and uncertain what to make of the responses their own writing receives. While work in small groups is an integral and essential part of any writing curriculum, an entire semester devoted exclusively to daily small group workshops may only produce frustration for developmental writers who need substantial support and reinforcement from a teacher as well as peers.

To engage students in revising, process teachers need to intervene early in the dynamics of the drafting process when students may be most open to questions that anticipate reader needs and reconceptualize their audience and purpose. In their research on the different revising strategies of inexperienced and experienced writers, Lester Faigley and Stephen Witte conclude that some students may fail to plan sufficiently and thus utilize revision as a means of discovery (411). Such research suggests the need for goal setting within the context of revision plans.

Grades as Boundaries to Development

A familiar saying in assessment groups is that students will attend to that which teachers assess. In our dialogue about how assessment affects our students' development as writers, we periodically wonder if we need to institute (in other seasons, abolish) grades from the developmental writing classroom. Whether to grade or not to grade remains an unsettled

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discussion that research alone may not completely resolve. Writing instructors who wish to focus students' attention on their development as writers rather than on their completion of discrete tasks have tried many techniques to do so. Of these, using ungraded work, "in progress" grades, and portfolios are techniques which attempt to direct the students' attention on the process of discovery, on expressing their ideas in writing, and on revising their writing to meet the needs of their audience, the task, or for clarity.

The use of ungraded work has a checkered history, both within our own institution and across the country. The National Center for Developmental Education surveyed 150 colleges, comparing the first year college course grades of students who had taken a graded pre-college or developmental writing course to those who had taken a non-graded pre-college writing course. The average grade of the groups on completion of their first actual college-level writing course showed a slight difference in favor of non-graded courses, but the difference was not statistically significant. These statistics mirror our own experiences with our developmental writing classes. While we currently use a pass/fail system, we continue to wrestle with the issues that grading and non-grading raise.

The first of these issues is the students' and the instructors' view of traditional A-B-C grades. When we use grades, we want the grade to tell the students how well we think they're progressing and how their skills are developing. The grade is meant to show progress, step by step toward effective communication. The students, in fact, typically focus on the grade to see if they've "done enough" or figured out "what the instructor wanted." While an instructor looks at long-term goals (their development as writers), the students focus on individual tasks and short-term goals. And the bottom line for the developmental students is often their grade point average; thus, the assignment grade becomes an important building block --not to their progress as a writer--but to their continuing as a student or receiving financial aid.

The underlying problem between these visions is one of motivation. With or without grades, instructors want the students to focus on the marginal and summary comments, thinking that these alone are a clear form of assessment and excellent motivation to improve (after all, aren't we responding to the text and telling the writer what's working and what's not working?). Process instructors who worry that grades get in the way feel that they present a false kind of "bottom line" on which the students will focus, ignoring the comments and suggestions for improvement or development along the way. Thus, by removing the grade and leaving only the comments, these instructors hope to force the students into the same beliefs (see, for example, Smith, 1997).

But many students are conditioned by years of training to see the grade as the motivator. "If it's higher than a __, I'll be happy; I need at least a C in this class!" or "If I can get a __ I'll be happy; no one ever gets an A from this instructor!" are the typical comments that reveal a student's motivation. Even by removing the grades, we rarely hear (even in our dreams!), the student comment "I can't wait to read my instructor's marginal notes; they tell me so much about how well I've communicated my ideas!" Instead, the students accept the lack of a grade,

searching then for the replacement words which will signify that they've done "enough": "Is this passing? Do I have to do anything else before it's done?"

For those of us who use grades, the developmental student often raises yet another problem. In order for grades to serve as the motivator, the student has to want good, or better, grades. Yet, for the developmental students we face whose previous educational experiences have often been unsuccessful, even a low C or a D is a sign of success, not a motivator to do better work. In graded and non-graded systems alike, finding the means to motivate students to improve as writers is the first most difficult task (see, for example, Sommer, 1989).

Clearly, another related aspect of this grading dilemma is the role that each perceives the instructor as playing. On the one hand, the writing instructor wants to see her role as an editor, a kind of nurturing, guiding mentor. The typical student, however, sees the instructor's role as evaluator, as judge and jury. Especially in developmental writing or freshman-level classes, breaking away from the role of teacher and moving into the role of facilitator is often extremely difficult for the writing instructor (see Hodges, 1992; Knoblaugh and Brannon, 1984; and Straub and Lunsford, 1995). As Edward M. White wrote "Think of what it would mean if our students saw us as coaches intent on helping them reach their own goals, instead of as inscrutable judges with our own agendas" (10). And there's no doubt that traditional grades reinforce the teacher-as-evaluator role.

In developmental classes of all kinds, another question surrounds that of grading: what makes the students "developmental" to start with? Are the students lacking writing skills (or math, or reading), or are they lacking the skills to be effective students? And, if the students who need to develop as students have fairly good writing skills, do we grade them differently than those students who are effective students (they get their work done, they work hard to revise and improve) but who have weak writing skills? Should we fail a student who has been working hard and revising but who has not yet achieved a sufficient level of "competence"? And shouldn't we fail the student who has not completed the course assignments or met the course requirements, but who has demonstrated adequate writing skills?

And even if the twin tasks of motivation and reward are solved, non-grading systems face another problem: what happens when your course is the only pass/fail course the students are taking? Our institution has very few pass/fail courses; even among the other developmental courses where students bring their mathematics or reading skills up to college level or explore career options, they can earn letter grades. True, only a few of these actually contribute to their overall grade point average (no "0-level" courses are used to compute their grade point nor contribute toward graduation requirements). But in our developmental writing class, we use the simple pass/fail to focus the students' attention on their writing competency. Yet, no matter how much we embrace this no-grade philosophy, we still continue to question how the students' experience in our non-graded developmental writing course fits into their educational experience as a whole.

We suspect that our students might be giving increased attention to their other graded courses, especially at crunch time--the end of the semester, for example--giving less time and

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attention to the pass/fail writing course than to their other courses, all of which are graded. What happens, in other words, when ungraded, process-oriented work becomes the easiest for the students to push aside for the graded (and thus seemingly more "real") work of their other classes? What do we do to keep them focused on their on-going writing and re-writing tasks?

The issue of whether to return to grades is, thus, an unresolved issue for us. While we still regard grades as an obstacle or barrier to student improvement, we are not entirely satisfied with the pass/fail option. Yet, although we vacillate on the issue of course assessment, we continue to emphasize the necessity of encouraging and developing our students' revision skills. Our basic operating assumption continues to be that even if these students develop only one skill -- the habit of revising -- they will be able to "survive" in freshman composition.

As process teachers, we agree, then, that a basic habit of mind these students need to cultivate is that of revising, but we have been unclear about the degree or quality of revising we expect. For teachers of writing, one of the tensions we face when we use a process approach is that as a profession we have not articulated fully the connection between revision's pivotal role in a writer's development and academic entrance and advancement. We appear to assume the same goals for revising from students at virtually every level. For these reasons, faculty teaching developmental writing at Ferris implemented the use of portfolios not only to emphasize our students' development as writers but also as a way to begin to examine how beginning writers responded to the emphasis on revision in our classrooms.

Revision as a Focus of Portfolio Assessment at Ferris

The writing assessment guru, Ed White, once commented: "the portfolio is the only assessment device that can evaluate a student's ability to understand revision processes" (123). In the developmental writing program at Ferris, portfolios had been used since 1984, and several initial assessment projects examined the kinds of writing found in the portfolios while also providing a test of rater reliability. In 1995, we returned to portfolios as a source of information about the ways our students responded to the teacher mandate to revise. At first, we approached revision by trying to discern the level of critical thinking necessary for students to accomplish the tasks and maneuvers necessary to improve a draft.

In particular, we looked at teacher comment and the apparent response—or lack of response—represented by the revisions evident in the portfolios. We first developed a matrix (Figure 3) to depict the levels or degrees of revision we might notice in a draft. It would provide an inventory of the kind of changes we noted from draft to draft. While the matrix would provide a comprehensive tally of the kinds of revision evident in the portfolios, it proved limited in quantifying only textual indicators or change without reference to quality. We wanted to assess not just evidence of revision but whether revision was utilized in an effective way.

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Figure 3

Student ID_____
# of Drafts _____

REVISION MATRIX
Initial to Final Draft

Genre_____

	not at all	a little	a lot
Global Revision 1. Preconceptualizing the entire paper. a. meaning changing b. meaning preserving (Faigley)			
Degree of Revision 2. How much of the revision seems guided by purpose to improve the focus of the paper?			
3. How much of the revision appears to be student-initiated?			
4. How much of the revision focus is adding material?			
5. How much of the revision focus is deletion of material?			
6. How much of the revision focus is restructuring of material?			
7. How much of the revision focus is actually editing for sentence error?			
8. How much of the revision focus is limited to rewording of phrases or sentences?			

Vasicek, Kuzma, Chrenka (3/95)

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Figure 4

portfolio code _____ reader _____ portfolio type _____

Primary Trait Rubric for Revising:

TARGET: The student demonstrates the ability to revise with awareness of audience and purpose directing revision.

Degree of Responsiveness: Minimally/ Moderately / Highly

Early Middle Late	Level Four: This portfolio employs well-chosen structures to revise. This writer makes changes to the interior of the draft with a clear sense of purpose and of developing a main idea. Level Three: This portfolio exhibits revision strategies but not always to good effect. This writer makes changes to the interior of the draft that go beyond word level changes but there may be some inconsistency or the changes may not be made with a clear sense of purpose or of developing a main idea. Level Two: This portfolio displays uneven learning in employing revision strategies and the writer apparently regards revising as primarily a matter of rewording at the sentence level. Level One: This portfolio does not include evidence of revising or includes only minimal evidence. The writer simply recopies or mistakes editing for revising. Does not attempt to revise.

Revision might be seen in textual evidence: 1) reworking to clarify thesis/or ideas, 2) addressing questions raised by readers (self or others), 3) deleting (may cross out), 4) elaborating (inserting with carets), 5) reorganizing (may use arrows). Levels of revision might include: 1) changing wording, 2) changing phrasing, 3) rewording sentences, 4) reworking paragraphs

Responsiveness to a reader's needs or comments may be evident in a writer's attempt to improve as necessary the coherence or fluency of writing on any level. The degree of responsiveness may be evident in the revisions of one draft or in comparing papers written early in the term with those written later in the term.

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Consequently, we designed a rubric with criteria based on course objectives (Figure 4). Our target or capstone objective was "This portfolio employs well-chosen structures to revise. This writer makes changes to the interior of the draft with a clear sense of purpose and of developing a main idea." A writer who obtained this level would show evidence of competence in being able to work with the draft as a whole piece, perhaps even changing the macroproposition and doing so to good effect. Revision, even at a very rudimentary level, can demonstrate concern for audience and purpose. As we devised a revision rubric, we thus saw the writer's revising for audience, purpose, and development of a main idea as key indicators of increasing ability.

Using already well-established portfolio assessment procedures, a group of eight faculty met over the summer of 1995 to read and evaluate twenty-one portfolios submitted by students taking the precollege course the previous academic year. Three portfolios (representing high, medium, and low ability) were collected from seven different instructors. Since we were interested in determining whether evidence of revision in the portfolios correlated to the overall rating of demonstrated writing competence, we used both a holistic rubric and a primary trait (revision) rubric.

Holistic scores for writing performance in sixteen of twenty-one portfolios showed improvement (Figure 5). The scores from the holistic rating were then correlated with the revision rubric. In eleven of twelve portfolios, improvement in the ability to revise corresponded with improved end-of-term holistic scores. Although revision was evident in portfolios showing improvement in their holistic scores, those same portfolios did not demonstrate that students consistently drew on a variety of revision strategies.

The results of the revision study at Ferris showed that developmental students were able to move at least in limited ways—beyond the sentence level when teachers guided that activity through repeated practice and highly structured, sequenced assignments that supported at several levels the planning and hypothesizing needed to revise. However, the discussion at the end of our rating session turned to the issue of autonomy. While writing teachers who follow a process approach are able to coach students so that they can operate at sophisticated levels to revise, we have yet to formulate how best to move teacher-dependent writers toward a degree of independence.

As a profession, we need to articulate clearly what we expect for revising at both beginning and advanced levels. We feel it may be enough to see consistent evidence of the student revising throughout the semester; evidence of structural revision or thesis-level revision is an improvement in the portfolio of a beginning writer. However, we need to ask how students cultivate habits of revision privileged by teachers and speculate about what affects the way students see revision tasks and how they carry them out.

We are particularly interested in what motivates students to revise and how students acquire what we have come to think of as a revision habit. With the goal of helping assess growth in revision and helping students internalize revision strategies and learn about themselves as writers, the assessment group exchanged examples of teaching methods used to cultivate

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Figure 5

Holistic Rubric: Evaluating overall quality of writing in portfolio.

Early
Late

Level Six: **Excellent in overall quality.** It is characteristically substantial in content (both length and development) and mature in style. It consistently demonstrates an ability to handle varied prose tasks successfully and to use language creatively and effectively in response to a reader's needs/ or comments. There are few proofreading errors. A "6" portfolio typically takes risks that work--either in content or form--and challenges the reader by trying something new or approaching the topic in a powerful or memorable way. When reviewing the portfolio, outsiders get the feeling they really know the person whose achievement is depicted there, and the reflective letter offers shows an insightful understanding of how the learning came about.

Level Five: **Very Good in overall quality.** Typically, a "5" portfolio is substantial in content as well as responsive to a reader's needs/ or comments. Exhibiting control of the writing process, and except for occasional editing problems, uses language effectively and creatively. It suggests the ability to write in varied situations effectively and capably if not always powerfully. A sense of audience and context is clearly present if not always firm. The portfolio may be clearly created primarily for others to assess, but there is also evidence of realistic self assessment and the student's voice is audible.

Level Four: **Good in overall quality.** The writing is competent in content and style, and the portfolio shows evidence of student responsiveness to a reader's needs/ or comments. There are more strengths than weaknesses, but there is an unevenness of quality or underdevelopment in the writing. Revision involves restructuring as well as rewording, and editing problems are minimal (not distracting). There is a sense of audience and context, but some of the writing may seem formulaic or lack a strong voice. There tends to be minimal risk-taking or originality. The self reflection, however, does suggest the student has a personal investment in explaining the content or the process in his or her writing found in the portfolio.

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Figure 5 cont.

Early
Late

Level Three: **Fair in overall quality.** Strengths and weaknesses tend to be evenly balanced--either within or among the pieces. There is a sense of intentionality controlling some of the student's choices, but the portfolio overall may not be very responsive to reader comment directed toward revising or editing. There is the sense of a writer having too much to handle and weaknesses are evident throughout. Student may not be able to articulate the reasons for choices made or to explain learning, but the reviewer may be able to recognize learning or infer reasons.

Level Two: **Below average in overall quality.** Weaknesses consistently predominate over strengths. By comparison wiyth a "1" portfolio, this portfolio may be fairly responsive to reader comment directed toward revising or editing. Although the portfolio may exhibit a sense of intentionality, it may do so by relying on a formulaic voice or approach. The writing may employ strategies but without a sense of appropriateness to the task or audience. Self-reflective statements, if present, add little to clarify or explain the learning.

Level One: **Poor in overall quality.** Weaknesses consistently outnumber strengths. It is usually characterized by pieces that are brief and unoriginal or uncreative in content and style. Revision, if evident, is usually limited to rewording, and editing problems are distracting. There is minimal attempt to make a coherent statement about learning.

This rubric is an adaptation of one found in Ed White's Teaching and Assessing Writing 2nd Edition San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 199 and "The Four Stages of Portfolio Growth" by F. Leon and Pearl R. Paulson, From "A Guide for Judging Portfolios," 1994, p.4 Reprinted in A Portfolio Primer, Geof Hewitt, Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1994.

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strategic revision. For instance, Brenda Vasicek contributed a student revision response sheet (Figure 6). Students are asked to take stock of the actual changes they made to a draft, noting very specifically where they added, deleted, or re-ordered material. More importantly, they are asked to reflect on why they made the changes they did and what improvement the changes made to the draft.

Internalizing Revision Habits Through Process Evaluation

What goes on in students' minds when composition teachers ask them to revise? Why, even when teachers use critical questioning and other methods to provoke further development of ideas, do students still have difficulty or even ignore negotiating and reinventing text? Is it difficult for them because they only see the authority behind the prompts? Is it because the marginal and end comments teachers use are on a different plain of thinking than where the students are? On the basis of our assessment work, we concluded that inexperienced writers tend to be "revision blocked," and that process teachers can help students gain facility by helping them practice a range of revision strategies.

In our ongoing discussions about revision, we have come to believe it is crucial that teachers use process assessment in order to credit and reinforce the value and centrality of revising. So, with some important caveats, we will end this investigation with a series of definitions we see as useful in helping students learn the revision habit.

Process assessment involves evaluating steps toward a final product instead of the final product exclusively. Because revision is such a vital part in a writer's development and is implicated in more than one step of the writing process, it is a crucial piece of the assessment of overall writing competence. Unfortunately, traditional assessment by assigning grades for writing performance --and even post-grade revising opportunities--does not indicate for students the quality issues we intend--especially if such opportunities are interpreted as a chance merely to run a grammar and spell check.

Moreover, while writing competence is often assessed through exit essays, these essays minimize the importance of revising because of time constraints and because under timed writing situations, many writers resort to formulaic five paragraph essays and still skip over revision, re-reading primarily to edit.

Portfolios provide a picture of the student's process over time and under different writing constraints and hence can tell us about what remains constant--i.e. what the student has internalized. As James Williams warns, however, process evaluation needs to be wary of awarding process points on the basis of quality. To do so is to send a contradictory message. Rough drafts must be allowed to remain uneven and messy. A better measure, Williams notes, is to look at the actual changes between successive drafts. On the other hand, perhaps process points should not be assigned automatically but awarded when students are clearly revising in appropriate ways beyond the sentence level. In formulating course policies, process teachers

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Figure 6 Revision prompts with response by an ESL student

Revision Memo Report
English 150

Revision is the attempt to clarify the content in a draft, to be sure that the draft really says what you intended. When you revise, you are looking primarily at content and the expression of ideas. Are these clearly and fully expressed? To become more aware of how and why revising occurs, you are asked to track the changes you made in your draft. Please use this page for notes on changes, then write a memo to me in pen and double spaced.

1. Where, if any where, did you **add** material to your draft? Why did you add that to your draft?

I added examples to my group in order to tell groups clearly. Also I added a sort of "hook" to my beginning paragraph to catch the attention of the reader.

2. Where, if any where, did you **cut** material from your draft? Why did you delete that material?

I deleted many sentences in my second group students because these sentences were not got good relation with the paragraph and previous words.

3. Where, if any where, did you change the **organization** of your draft? Why did you change the organization?

I changed the place of the paragraphs, because hard workers paragraph was extreme and important case for my essay.

4. Where, if any where, did you **change the wording** in your draft? Why did you change the wording?

I changed many the wording, because they made my essay unclear. Reader can confront with difficulties in understanding.

5. Where, if anywhere, did you make **other changes** to improve the expression of ideas in the paper? Why did you make the change?

I rote range of the conclusion. Because I want to gain coherence with my purpose and "hook"

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can reserve twenty or thirty percent of the final grade for evidence of process as it appears in the portfolio.

Through the lens of the portfolio, process teachers can evaluate the extent and quality of revision strategies so that students themselves become aware of how they have utilized revision. Looking at the unique character of an individual writer's portfolio may help teachers avoid undue emphasis on a single performance or end- product and can help us reflect on the degree to which students have taken risks by renegotiating the text at a deeper level. Especially with developmental writers—we need to begin rewarding the process as well as the product.

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